



State of Wisconsin
Department of Public Instruction
Elizabeth Burmaster, State Superintendent

FALL CONFERENCE WELCOME AND REMARKS

State Superintendent Elizabeth Burmaster

University of Wisconsin-Madison, Memorial Union

September 21, 2005

Thank you, Wendell, for that kind introduction, and your leadership.

Thank you to the Waukesha South High School Marching Band, under the direction of Guy Kammerer. The Waukesha community and Superintendent Dave Schmidt have a lot to be proud of. Thanks to the children and young people of Madison's Shorewood Elementary and Toki Middle schools for their international welcome.

Welcome and thank you, school district administrators, for the tremendous commitment you demonstrate in serving the children and public schools and libraries of Wisconsin. As superintendents, every day, you bring people together around our shared value and responsibility of quality education. A shared value that has defined the excellence of our great state in the past and will most certainly define the future of our state for years to come.

Thank you for all you do, including your leadership and response this month as we opened our hearts and schools to Gulf Coast students displaced by Hurricane Katrina.

I am honored to serve as your state superintendent and to work with you as chief advocate for our children and their education. Together, we send the message loud and clear—Wisconsin citizens believe in their children and believe in the power of education.

I am honored to have the opportunity to serve you for four more years, as together, we continue to fight for the promise of quality education in Wisconsin.

Together, we accomplish much in our schools through your leadership—through educators' devoted service—through parents' active involvement—through community support—and through students' hard work.

Our united efforts have no greater ally than Gov. Jim Doyle. Gov. Doyle proved this again in July by signing a budget that prioritizes education and protects local property taxpayers. The governor acted wisely in vetoing certain portions of the 2005-07 spending plan that would have resulted in immediate and devastating cuts to course offerings, programs, staff, and educational services in our schools. The start of school this month could have looked vastly different.

And, we will benefit from a number of my budget proposals announced here a year ago and now contained in our new state budget — such as increased general equalization and pupil transportation aid, state funding for my high cost special education "Keeping the Promise" initiative, increased categorical bilingual-bicultural and special education aid, mentoring grants for initial educators, funding for an on-line licensing system, increase in the low-revenue ceiling, grants for Advanced Placement and talented and gifted programs, and additional dollars for our public library system and Badgerlink. We move forward with renewed focus on our goals and priorities.

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As we have collaborated and worked together these last four years, I look forward to further partnership in the next four years. As we advance our New Wisconsin Promise and quality education for all our students, let us focus on the following priorities as we move forward building partnerships for 21st Century learners.

As we saw this morning, international education begins at home, recognizing the diversity of our own community. In Wisconsin schools, over 100 heritage languages are represented. Expanding an international perspective in all our schools is vital for our future economic development and prosperity in an increasingly global society. In the past year, our statewide efforts have been nationally recognized, but there is more to be done. We are expanding opportunities through partnerships and exchanges with Japan, Thailand, Germany, France, and the rest of the European Union, and through our Fulbright education programs in Thailand, Laos, and Vietnam. Working together, we can infuse international knowledge and perspective throughout the curriculum and partner with Wisconsin's international business community to benefit our education links and learning opportunities for our students.

In Wisconsin, we continue to work together on increasing student achievement. We have worked in partnership with many of you to increase and improve state support for school improvement. This year, we will work with practitioners in your schools to develop and implement a mathematics and adolescent literacy project and promote best practices through web and print materials and professional development. School improvement occurs when resources and the latest research are put into the hands of educators teaching students in the classroom.

At the district and state level we know that data is only effective when we focus our management and use on the right questions. Together, we have advanced our Strategic Data Management and this year we will partner with you to help shape 1) what data we collect, 2) how we collect it, and 3) how we make it accessible and useful.

Many schools around the state are advancing citizenship and service-learning. Our statewide service-learning conferences have brought together hundreds of educators and students. Working with many of you and your staff, we will organize a statewide service-learning youth leadership corps that involves our rural youth leaders.

Collaboration and partnership is at the center of our success expanding 4-year old kindergarten in Wisconsin. This year over 220 school districts will offer 4-year old kindergarten and public/private/Headstart community approaches for expansion of 4K are being implemented in many districts. Later today we will unveil new research, conducted by Northstar Economics, on the economic benefits of 4-year-old kindergarten.

A partnership on the move is our Alliance for Attendance initiative started in Milwaukee and expanding this year to the Green Bay Area and Menominee Indian school districts. As each of the communities come together to improve student attendance, we look to make this initiative adaptable to other districts.

Our Rural Initiative has resulted in greater collaboration and focus on the importance of our rural schools, communities, and libraries, and their challenges. Working in partnership with UW-Extension and a number of schools, we have brought together students from rural schools to empower their leadership.

As you know, some of the Advancing Rural Wisconsin initiative — namely increased transportation aid, and low revenue ceiling changes — were incorporated into this biennial budget. I look forward, in collaboration with my rural advisory council, to continue advocating for increased funding for our rural schools through my sparsity funding proposal. We will partner with rural communities, the departments of Workforce Development, Agriculture, Tourism, and others to hold a statewide summit on economic development in rural areas in January.

We have truly formed a partnership working to implement our Quality Educator Initiative. Our PK-16 collaboration on PI 34 will continue with our master educator pilot, the QEI, which you will hear about at this conference, our Wallace grant identifying excellence in the urban principalship, and our teacher mentor grants.

As chair of the Education Committee of the Board of Regents, I will be working directly with our UW System Schools of Education to address access, credits to degree, certification supply and demand, and

alternative certification issues. Working collaboratively, through PK-16 partnerships, we can ensure that our state continues to recruit, retain and professionally develop the highest quality educators.

Communities around the state are working to support the arts in our schools. We must ensure that arts education does not suffer as we leave no child untested. At the national level, as a Commissioner of the Education Commission of the States, I will ensure Wisconsin is a leader as we bring a focus on the excellence of the arts in our schools.

Our statewide advisory council on Personal Financial Literacy will advance standards and regional workshops. Ensuring students make wise decisions in their financial futures strengthens their personal prosperity and our economy.

Technological innovation can build partnerships. Our committee of Virtual Education Advisers will provide recommendations and identify best practices in virtual education. We owe it to our students and their parents to recognize and ensure quality virtual education.

Our PK-16 Council, comprised of leaders from the state's PK-12 schools, the University of Wisconsin System, the Technical College System, and the state's private colleges and universities, has been laying the foundation for new educational partnerships for the last four years. The council works with leaders in business, labor, and government to create the best educational opportunities for all Wisconsin students. We will take these partnerships to the next level, promoting PK-16 partnerships around early childhood, federal funding for education, and education for economic development—advancing the number of baccalaureate degrees in Wisconsin.

Each of us knows and values the importance of a quality high school education. Our High School Task Force is developing recommendations on what a high school student should know and be able to do for the 21st Century. We will hold a high school summit and pursue grant opportunities to promote this initiative and our high school students' futures.

In Wisconsin, we are working together in partnership on each of these priorities. As we begin this year, let our hearts and minds be reinvigorated and renewed by the very ideals which drew us all to this profession—the greater purpose of public education in a democratic society.

We know that the most meaningful education reveals the connections—between people, between subjects, between cultures. For students of this generation to be truly prepared as global citizens of the 21st Century, they must reach far beyond the isolated facts, putting learning in a larger context, and discovering their future role in the family, society, and the world of work.

We all would agree: an educator's work is never done, but will indeed be carried on in the hearts and minds of those we teach. A philosopher once wrote: "The art of progress is to preserve order amid change, and to preserve change amid order." Together we move forward doing both.

Thank you for your dedicated service to Wisconsin's students, families and communities. It is an honor to work for you and with you in partnership.